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## CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

9

11 January 1955

MEMORANDUM TO: Steering Committee on NIE 11-5-55

SUBJECT : Restatement of the Purpose of NIE 11-5-55  
(Old NIE 11-9-54)

1. In view of the difficulties encountered in preparation of the Step One contribution and the apparent lack of common understanding of the purpose, method, and objectives of NIE 11-5-55, it appears appropriate to review the background of this project with the Steering Committee. The following is in general terms, O/NE's understanding of what this estimate set out to achieve and how it was to be achieved.

2. Background. The subject of Soviet air defense has long been considered of sufficient importance to national security to merit consideration by the entire intelligence community. Moreover, it covers a field of direct interest to several agencies, i.e. O/NI on naval aspects, AFOIN on air force aspects, G-2 on anti-aircraft, O/RR on economic aspects and civil defense, etc. Upon the completion of SIE-5, the first national estimate on Soviet air defenses, General Smith stated and the IAC agreed that a similar NIE should be undertaken periodically and that future estimates should be concerned more

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with capabilities and less with mere inventories of Soviet strengths. In addition, there has been growing interest in the intelligence community in correlating military production estimates with annual budgets and economic capabilities. The first big step in this direction undertaken in NIE 11-6-54 was well received by the consumers of national estimates. In the method used in NIE 11-6-54, estimated requirements for guided missiles were assessed against economic capabilities. In drafting the terms of reference for NIE 11-5-55, a similar approach was taken in the belief that advances could be made both toward a better statement of Soviet capabilities and toward blocking out in cost terms a further important sector of Soviet military effort.

3. Purpose of NIE 11-5-55. In view of the fact that a detailed AFOIN-ONI study of Soviet air defense strengths and weaknesses has recently been published, the need for a national estimate on this subject has been questioned. This need can be expressed in the following terms:

- a. The need for drafting an estimate in terms of a different consumer, i.e., The National Security Council.
- b. The need for incorporation in the estimate of an estimate of the economic cost of air defense and economic capabilities to provide such a defense.

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- c. The need for a study which represents the coordinated views of all IAC agencies which have capabilities in this field.
- d. The need for a more direct appraisal of the effectiveness and over-all capabilities of the Soviet air defense system as a matter of vital importance to our own national security.

4. Methodology. All of the above objectives except the last one can easily be met by the normal NIE process. To make an appraisal of the over-all effectiveness of an air defense system is recognized as an impossible task in any absolute terms. However, it should be possible to make some form of over-all appraisal which would be more useful than past estimates in this field. The terms of reference for NIE 11-5-55 were drafted with the thought in mind that such an appraisal could not be made in terms of the individual factors in an air defense system, such as kill probabilities under varying climatic conditions, but might be feasible on a much broader basis. For this reason, the terms of reference for Step One were drafted to provide two essential bases for a general appraisal of effectiveness:

- a. The probable Soviet estimate <sup>of the</sup> approximate size and composition of the ~~attacking force~~ *forces threatening the Soviet bloc*
- b. The numbers and types of equipment and forces required to meet such a threat.

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5. There have been objections by some agencies to any estimate of the requirements for an adequate air defense system. These objections stem from the belief that it is impossible to define what an adequate air defense requirement would be. This is admittedly true but is also true of many other intelligence estimates. It will never be possible fully to evaluate the wartime adequacy of complex weapons systems which in many cases are projected far into the future. Nevertheless, a useful approximation of Soviet air defense requirements can possibly be made by relying upon knowledge of the requirements developed for our own air defense system and knowledge of the past composition of the Soviet air defense system.

*In order to proceed under the methodology adopted for this problem*  
 6. ~~In the final analysis, *the only realistic way of evaluating*~~

*the progress of* Soviet capabilities to develop and operate highly complex and technical weapons systems is *being* ~~to compare their progress with our own.~~ *with our own progress*  
 Our own air defense system provides the only bench mark against which the Soviet air defense system can be evaluated. It must be recognized that existing information pertaining to our own air defense system is the only available yardstick for measurement of the Soviet system. We can make all sorts of allowances for differences in technique, approach, training, geography, etc. but basically the problems faced by both countries are in many ways comparable. Since intelligence itself cannot directly compare US and Soviet weapons systems, however, we have utilized the technique of comparing the Soviet system

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to what we consider a proper air defense system should be. We further believe such an appraisal would be of considerable value to our national planners.

7. The NIE 11-5-55 procedure is to a large extent experimental and is part of the continuing effort of the IAC agencies to explore new methods and techniques of analyzing foreign weapons systems so as to improve on the old type of "hardware" listing. Our own services have increasingly employed operational analysis techniques for evaluating the effectiveness of present and projected US weapons systems. Such techniques should also have considerable application for intelligence in analyzing Soviet weapons systems. NIE 11-5 is an attempt to develop such a technique. If it proves unsatisfactory upon completion, the IAC Representatives should feel wholly free to recommend that any such new approach be dropped from future estimates. On the other hand, we do not feel that we should prejudge the new methodology before it has been tried. We believe that the present exercise has a good chance of achieving a considerable forward step for our intelligence on the USSR.

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Chairman Steering Committee

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